

FROM THE PILOTHOUSE



Annual Dinner, Saturday, April 4

We will carry on the traditional HRSMS dinner in honor of our 31st anniversary and with thanks to the spouses who turn us loose once a month for what an old Long Island friend (and *his* wife) used to call “ship-nut night.” Jack and Jean Bobbitt have again offered to act as our hosts at the James River Country Club. Members will find details and registration coupon on an enclosure with this *Logbook*. Please return the coupon to Bob Comet promptly, and let’s have a great evening.

Acid and Lead

Hard on the heels of comments by Gene Larson and Joe McCleary in the December *Nautical Research Journal* comes a new technical report on *Lead Corrosion in Exhibition Ship Models*. Written by Dana Wegner, Curator of Models for the Naval Surface Warfare Center, it is based on studies of existing literature, further experimentation, and long-term observation of models in the Navy’s collection.

The chief culprit is acetic acid, a relatively mild substance but one that is destructive to lead and other metals—including aluminum, brass, copper, and even steel—during prolonged exposure in confined environments such as model cases. The report points out that acetic acid is an “inherent vice” that is present in many materials used in ship modeling, especially woods. “*Any* wood will fall into at least the minimally harmful category” (emphasis added). And hardwoods emit more acetic acid than soft. Basswood, very popular among modelers, is listed in the “very harmful” group, along with wood and wood products such as plywood and chipboard that are made with certain glues or treated with other chemicals, such as fire-proofing or rot-resistant materials. Pine, Douglas fir, certain mahoganies, and obeche are among the “less harmful.” Acetic acid also occurs in many other modeling materials, including white glues, virtually all types of paints and varnishes, some polyesters, plastics, and dyes, products containing ammonia, anything that smells like vinegar, some silicon RTV adhesives and caulks, and possibly cast acrylics (“Plexiglas”). And this is just a small sampling of the list that is already stated to be incomplete!

The report offers several suggestions, and discusses some that

do *not* help. The two most practical for hobbyists are: (1) avoid high-risk materials like oak and plywood in cases; (2) ventilate your cases with opening(s) equivalent to a one-inch hole per cubic yard of enclosure, or 30 cm per cubic meter, to allow air change. Makes you wonder how Navy Board and P-O-W models have survived for centuries, and whether all of our efforts are doomed to short lives, doesn’t it?

—Alan Frazer

Mystery Photo

Welcome to the seventh installment of “Mystery Photo” where Bill Clarke asks the burning question, “What Ship Is It?” This month’s photograph(s) continues Bill’s quest to challenge the reader in identifying a ship, but begins a new phase where he bows out from adding commentary. Tell us what you can about the photograph, the story behind the photograph, and, if possible, date it for us as well. Bill invites everyone to participate in identifying these images and to contribute their own mystery photograph, if they wish. By playing, we can all learn to use photographs as primary reference sources. I will collate, tabulate, and masticate all information and responses, and present the aggregate to the readership in the next newsletter. Help solve the mystery!

The seventh Mystery Photo, *Logbook* No. 140, continues Bill’s foray through the pre-dreadnought era and presents us with a vessel I know all too well. And, what luck! In this issue, Now Silent Bill provided two views (two chances?) to study. Also, the copy quality has greatly improved—thank you, Tom! What do the photographs reveal? I may jump between the two photographs as I make my commentary, so bear with me and follow along. These photographs show a relatively small vessel at pier side. The hull is unremarkable in style and features the straight stem, cruiser stern, and gentle, sweeping sheer that is popular to this period. In the bow-on view, we can see what appears to be a step in the hull just at the upper edge of the boot topping. Half way between the boot topping and main deck, we see the hawser ports with open lids. Navy stockless anchors are lashed to billboards on each side of the spar deck. The handling davit for the

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starboard anchor is up but unrigged. Notice the fancy bow ornamentation. Several feet above the sailor's heads, you can just make out the forward awning rig, but without its canvas awning. The spar or main deck is flush and equipped with partial bulwarks. There is a single, relatively tall stack. Her rig is similar to that of a schooner, but slightly modified to carry loose-footed storm (steadying) sails only. Notice the rattled stays. Half-way up the foremast is an enclosed crow's nest or lookout. We can see three ship's boats, the after two suspended from davits, and we can assume an equal arrangement for the port side, as well. The forward set of davits are linked at the top with a strongback. Below this, a steam powered launch, with its canvas awning set, rests in cradles. Four gun port openings are spaced along the hull, the after most opening, just visible below the main mast, has its doors closed. The only visible superstructure is a chart house, seen just ahead of the steam launch. Above it is an open bridge covered by an awning. A search light sits on a platform just forward of the bridge. A 4-inch gun with half shield dominates the bow. At least three ventilators are visible. Sailors appear to perform routine maintenance throughout the vessel. An awning shades the after deck. And, of course, the proper flags fly from each staff. This vessel wears the standard US Navy paint scheme used prior to 1910. The hull is white to the level of the main deck and buff above that. The upper most band of the smoke stack is black. In the background, we see structures that appear to be derricks, gantries, and overhead cranes. A tall smokestack, possibly connected with a power plant, is visible behind the 4-inch deck gun. Can anyone identify the location of this photograph? Finally, does anyone recognize the ship visible off the starboard quarter? Let's see what we can learn from these clues.

This vessel is too small to be a cruiser or a destroyer and too well armed for a yacht. Using the sailor's height for scale and assuming a near broadside image, we can estimate a ship's length of no more than 200 feet. This relatively small vessel would then fall into two categories: Navy gunboat or Revenue cutter. However, we can determine that it belongs to the US Navy because of the flags she is flying and because the armament is too heavy for the Revenue Cutter Service. A Search through several sources produced lists of Navy gunboats but no photographs of a gunboat to match our mystery photos. Alden's *The American Steel Navy*, though, did have a profile line drawing, on page 379, that matched our vessel. Known as gunboat No. 14 and gunboat No. 15, these two ships make up the *Wheeling* class built by the Union Iron Works, of San Francisco, California. Named *Wheeling* and *Marietta*, these ships commemorate two towns along the Ohio River. Both ships, authorized in 1895, were laid down in 1896 and completed in 1897. *Wheeling* was the longer lived of the two, lasting until after the end of the Second World War, whereas *Marietta* was sold out of service in 1920. The crew numbered 11 officers and 129 enlisted men. Their intended duty stations were the Far East and equatorial regions and many of their design features reflected this.

These vessels were of composite construction--iron(steel) frames and wood sheathing below the waterline. This explains the visible step in the hull at the boot topping. Wood sheathing and copper plating were necessary for a vessel operating in tropical waters that would not receive regular dry docking. The rigging for awnings is an example of the measures taken to reduce heat build-up on deck and inside the vessel in the hotter climates. The partial bulwarks, I mentioned above, served two functions. First, they provided stowage for hammock berthing as the navy provided bunks and staterooms for the officers only--ordinary seamen ate, slept, and fought in the same space, so their "furniture" was portable. The second use of the hammock stowage was to provide shielding for the crew from small arms fire and splinters. The bulwarks ended short of the deck ends to give clear arcs of fire to the 4-inch deck guns. The low hawser ports tell us that the anchor handling gear is located on the gun deck. This does two things: it frees the forward deck space for the bow 4-inch gun and shields the handling gear from the sea. The tall smoke stack provides natural draft to the coal fired boilers, thereby increasing their efficiency and extending the ship's range. Also, a tall stack will help keep the large volume of smoke and flue gasses produced by a coal fired power plant away from the vessel and crew. The hull itself, is large and roomy compared to crew size and has a fair amount of freeboard to help it in a seaway. These are important elements to consider for a vessel intended for patrol duties far from regular basing facilities.

Which one of the two gunboats is this one? There is a third unpublished photograph, in this series, taken from the stern that clearly shows the vessel's name. This mystery ship is *Marietta*. I have compiled much information on this vessel, including a copy of the arrangement drawings used by Chief Constructor Philip Hichborn to illustrate a paper on "Recent Designs of Vessels for the US Navy." This paper and the plans were found in *Transactions: Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers*, Vol.3, 1895. Plates 37-41.

Let's see what the membership found out about this photograph. Jack Bobbitt was the first to hazard a guess on this vessel and said that the ship was too small to be a cruiser and looked more like something from the Coast Guard. Not a bad guess! But as I stated earlier in this column, the armament is too heavy for the Coast Guard or, its antecedent, the Revenue Cutter Service. Revenue Cutters from this period, usually more lightly armed, carried only one 3-inch gun and 6-pound cannon to destroy derelicts.

Let me ask this question. During the transition period from sail to steam, steel hulled, engine powered vessels tended to carry both sail and steam plants for propulsion. The sailing rig, usually referred to as "auxiliary sail," is explained as being necessary in case the engine suffered a casualty. At a time before non line of sight communications and satellite weather reporting, some redundancy was probably a good

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thing for vessels intended for solitary service. These ships, however, were designed and built during the late 1890's when designers had about 50 years experience with steam power. Was a combined power plant still necessary or were ships still being built with features that mimicked their sailing counterparts? *Marietta's* reduced rig clearly is not intended to power this vessel. Perhaps their resemblance to sail powered vessels was more than just a coincidence, after all internal arrangements and shipboard routines were still very much the same. So what was the reasoning behind adding a rig that includes two tall masts? Was the tall rig simply an anachronism from the sailing era? Did designers add it to the vessel to aid in controlling its motion in heavy seas? Or, was a conscious decision made adding the sailing rig to give the vessel the response and feel of a sailing ship in a seaway--and used to keep the sailor's skills honed, too? How does this compare to today's thinking where so many are all too willing to tear down existing paradigms in ship design? what do you think?

John Cheevers

MINUTES



The meeting was rung to order by the Skipper at 20:10 Hours. Three guests were present. Marty Steffen, Richard Moore, and Tom Sanderson.

There were no corrections to the minutes.

The purser's report was given.

Old Business: There was a second reading of the proposed changes to section 1A of the bylaws. Jack Bobbitt made a motion to adopt the change. There was a second and the motion was passed. The Skipper read the nominees for officers. Since the slate was running unopposed, the Skipper directed the Clerk to cast a single ballot. The current slate of officers was elected to a second term. Jim McCurdy said that the club archives were in the process of being moved. Graham Horne asked members to contact him about giving presentations at the meetings to continue our technical series. Joe McCleary said that the NRG - Mariners Museum Symposium is filling the available slots and members need to expedite their registration if they wish to attend.

New Business: It was noted that it is time to renew the club's membership in the NRG. Bill Clarke made a motion to continue our membership the current level. With a second by Joe McCleary the motion was passed. Marty Steffen said the Hampton Boat Show (April 25-26) will provide space to display ship models and invited the club to participate. The annual banquet was set for April 4, Jack Bobbitt will provide details for inclusion in the March newsletter. Bill Clarke asked Joe McCleary about the Queen Mary Symposium. Joe gave a

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MYSTERY PHOTO

Contact John Cheevers by mail or telephone if you know what it is

NOTABLE EVENTS

MARCH

13 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host Greg Harrington
 20-22 NRG & Mariners Museum Ship Model Building
 Symposium, Mariners Museum

APRIL

4 Annual HRSMS Banquet, James River Country Club

10 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host Ulrich Guenther

MAY

8 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host Southside Bunch

16-17 6th Annual Mid-Atlantic Maritime Festival, CBMM

JUNE

12 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host Bill Clarke

26-28 "Wooden Boat Show", St. Michaels Md.

JULY

10 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host David Tagg

AUGUST

14 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host Williamsburg
 AARP

SEPTEMBER

11 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host Dean Sword

24-27 NRG Conference, Morristown NJ

OCTOBER

9 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host Bob Comet

NOVEMBER

13 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host Heinz Schiller

DECEMBER

11 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host Jack Bobbitt

JANUARY

8 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

FEBRUARY

13 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

Next Meeting

Date: Friday March 13, 2000 hours

Location: 107 Steffi Place, Newport News

Host: Greg Harrington (757) 930-4615

Directions:

Take I 64 to J CLYDE MORRIS BLVD (US 17)

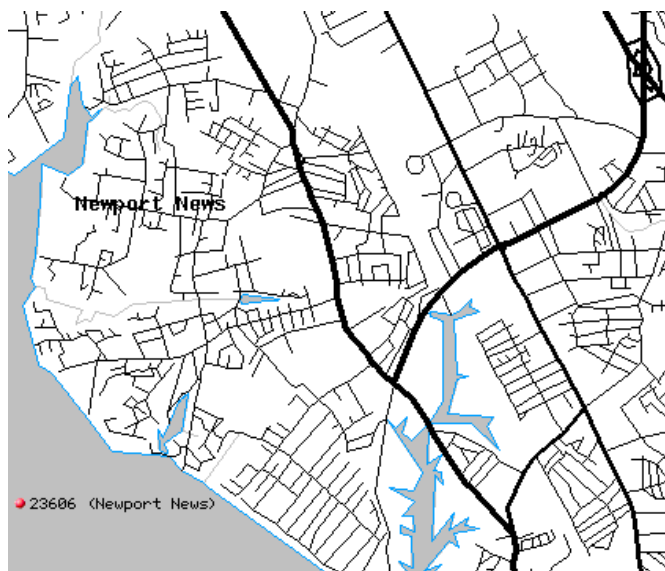
J CLYDE MORRIS BLVD (US 17) heading southwest for 2.7 miles

Turn right on WARWICK BLVD (US 60) heading northwest for 1.4 miles.

Turn left on DEEP CREEK RD heading west for 1.1 miles.

Turn left on BARCLAY RD heading southwest for 0.4 miles

Turn right on Steffi Place.



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synopsis of that event. Bill asked that members consider who they might want for speakers at the year 2000 NRG Convention. He also asked the members to consider an event for Thursday to extend the convention.

Show and Tell: The Skipper said that the Mariners Museum will be having the "Last Dinner on the Titanic" on April 4th in conflict with our banquet. Jack Bobbitt showed his technique of applying lacquered cloth to wood using a spray adhesive. Graham Horne gave his opinion of the Preac table saw and showed his thickness sander with lathe attachment. He also showed a unique miter box. Richard Moore inquired about sources of model building supplies. He was referred to The NRG homepage.

The meeting was adjourned at 2136 hours.

WATCH, QUARTER AND STATION BILL



Skipper:	Alan Frazer	(757) 865-7300
1 st Mate:	Joe McCleary	(757) 253-1802
Purser:	Bob Comet	(757) 934-1279
Clerk:	Tom Saunders	(757) 850-0580
Historian:	Jim McCurdy	(757) 482-2846
Editors:	John Cheevers	(757) 591-8955
	Bill Clarke	(757) 868-6809
	Tom Saunders	(757)-850-0580